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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**DISBARRED CHARLES COUNTY LAWYER PLEADS GUILTY TO
WIRE AND MAIL FRAUD IN SCHEME DEFRAUDING CLIENTS' ESTATES**

Greenbelt, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that William B. Ellinger, age 70, of LaPlata, Maryland pleaded guilty today before the U.S. District Court Judge Deborah K. Chasanow to 2 counts of mail fraud and 3 counts of wire fraud in connection with a 6 year scheme to defraud money from the estates of his clients.

In a statement of facts provided to the court as part of the plea agreement, Ellinger admitted that between March 1996 and at least July 2002, while practicing law under the professional association of Mitchell & Ellinger in LaPlata Maryland, he defrauded the estates of Harlan McGregor, Velva H. Perrygo, George Lindsay and Elizabeth Epp. Ellinger would maintain the check book for the bank account of each estate. Ellinger wrote unauthorized checks on the estate accounts payable to Mitchell & Ellinger and deposited the checks into his law firm account. In some instances Ellinger forged the signature of the estate's personal representative and/or the beneficiary listed on the insurance disbursements and deposited the proceeds into the law firm account. Ellinger withdrew the funds from the law firm account for his personal use. To conceal the fraud, Ellinger

prepared and filed false accounting statements with the Orphans Court of Charles County, Maryland. The total loss suffered by the estates and their beneficiaries is \$679,819.27. Ellinger agreed to disbarment last year.

United States Attorney Thomas M. DiBiagio stated that “ Individuals entrusted with people’s money have a fiduciary duty to act in their clients’ interests. When they breach that duty they will be prosecuted.”

Ellinger faces a maximum of 20 years in prison followed by 3 years of supervised release, and a \$250,000 fine for each of the two mail fraud counts; and 30 years in prison followed by 5 years of supervised release and a fine of \$1 million for each of the three bank fraud counts. Ellinger is on pretrial release pending his sentencing which is scheduled for April 26, 2004 at 2:00 pm.

Charles County State’s Attorney Leonard Collins referred this matter for federal investigation which was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Charles County Sheriff’s Office. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Deborah A. Johnston.